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SPAWN'S UNIVERSE 92 22

RORY McCONVILLE
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TODD McFARLANE

PREVIOUSLY IN *SPAWN*

The Exodus Foundation has been torn apart by The Forsaken. Now, he has no masters. Meanwhile, the surprise return of the cybernetic Russian assassin, Overt-Kill, could tip the scales in Jim Downing's favor.

image

TODD McFARLANE PRODUCTIONS

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ABEL?
"MY LIFE, AND ANY REAL MEANING IT HAD, TRULY BEGAN WITH THE MURDER OF MY BROTHER.
"IT WAS THIS ACT OF CRUEL NECESSITY THAT LED TO MY FIRST EXILE.
"AN EXILE THAT FORCED ME TO WANDER THE VASTNESS OF EARTH FOR THE REST OF MY DAYS, NEVER KNOWING ANY PEACE.
"AND IT WAS THIS ACT THAT ENSURED THAT WHEN DEATH FINALLY CAME FOR ME, THERE WOULD BE ONLY ONE PLACE I'D BE DESTINED FOR."

"HELL.
"AND WITHIN A FEW HEARTBEATS, I KNEW FROM THAT DAY FORWARD I WOULD DO WHATEVER IT TOOK TO EVENTUALLY RULE OVER THAT LAND.
LET ME LOOK AT YOU.
LET ME SEE WHAT WE HAVE HERE.
"AND ALL WHO OCCUPIED IT."

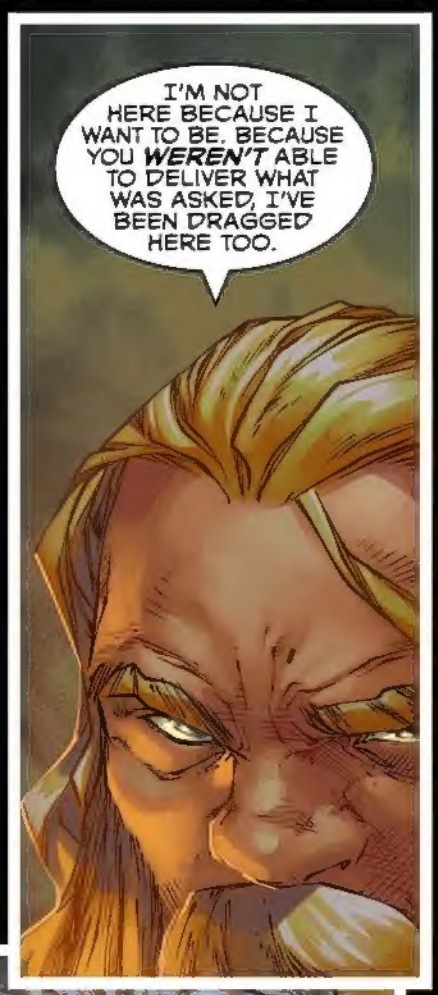
AHHH... FRESH MEAT TO PLAY WITH.
"MY BROTHER'S DEATH HAD BEEN AN ACCIDENT...
"...A MOMENT OF MADNESS, WHEN I LET MY ANGER PREVAIL.
"SINCE THAT DAY, I'D OFTEN DOUBTED WHETHER I WOULD BE ABLE TO AGAIN TAKE ANOTHER'S LIFE.
KRKK
"HELL QUICKLY RELIEVED ME OF THAT ILLUSION, THOUGH."

"I LOST MYSELF, IN THOSE FIRST FEW YEARS, IN ITS COUNTLESS SHADOWED REALMS, EXPLORING AND EDUCATING MYSELF IN ALL OF ITS DARK PRACTICES.
"IN THOSE DAYS, A HUMAN PRESENCE WAS STILL A NOVELTY THERE, AND SOON I BEGAN TO ACQUIRE A REPUTATION.
"ENOUGH OF ONE TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF MALEBOLGIA, ONE OF HELL'S MANY RULERS.
Tell me your name, human.
I WAS KNOWN AS CAIN. NOW I'M COGLIOSTRO.
I've heard tales about you. Many of them.
I believe you could be of use to my army. And to me.
"I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO ACCEPT."

"BECAUSE I NEEDED TO BIDE TIME AS I WAS STILL JUST ONE MAN. IN ORDER TO TAKE THE THRONE, I NEEDED TO INCREASE MY POWER AND GATHER ALLIES TO MY SIDE.
"SERVING MALEBOLGIA'S ARMY GAVE ME THE CHANCE TO DO BOTH.
"THOSE NEXT FEW YEARS PASSED IN A BLUR OF BAPTISM AND BLOOD."
COGLIOSTRO...

MALEBOLGIA HAS NEED OF YOUR SERVICES.
I'VE BEEN SERVING, ARGUS, WHAT MORE DOES HE ASK?
MALEBOLGIA SEEKS TO CREATE A NEW CLASS OF ELITE SOLDIERS. ONES CAPABLE OF LEADING HIS ARMIES AGAINST THOSE OF HEAVEN.
THE KEY WILL BE THE FORGING OF A SYMBIOTIC ARMOR FOR THESE WARRIORS TO WEAR.
OUR PRIOR ATTEMPTS HAVE BEEN *UNSATISFACTORY*, HOWEVER, LARGELY DUE TO OUR LIMITED UNDERSTANDING OF NECROPLASM. IT HAS BEEN SAID YOU GAINED KNOWLEDGE OF IT DURING YOUR TRAVELS. IS THIS TRUE?
YES.
GOOD. THEN LORD MALEBOLGIA ASKS THAT YOU JOIN IN HIS MISSION. TO SHARE YOUR LEARNINGS AND WISDOM.
COGLIOSTRO, MAY I INTRODUCE THE HEAD OF THIS PROJECT...
"DESPITE MY OUTWARD ENTHUSIASM, I APPROACHED THIS PROJECT WITH VEILED CAUTION, HAVING HEARD TALES OF OTHERS WHO'D BEEN RECRUITED FOR THE SAME MISSION.
"EVERY ONE EVENTUALLY BANISHED TO THE PITS WHEN THEY FAILED TO DELIVER TO MALEBOLGIA'S EXPECTATIONS."

A HUMAN...?
...THIS IS VIOLATOR.
THAT'S WHAT YOU'VE BROUGHT ME, ARGUS? THEY'RE NOT TO BE TRUSTED WITH MATTERS THIS IMPORTANT.


I'M NOT HERE BECAUSE I WANT TO BE. BECAUSE YOU WEREN'T ABLE TO DELIVER WHAT WAS ASKED, I'VE BEEN DRAGGED HERE TOO.

WHAT DID YOU SAY... HUMAN?

ENOUGH!
MALEBOLGIA HAS TASKED YOU BOTH TO DELIVER THE NEW ARMOR WITHIN TWENTY FIRE. SO, I SUGGEST YOU NOT WASTE TIME ON PERSONAL AGENDAS.
AGREED. I WILL TOLERATE YOU FOR NOW, HUMAN, BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE.

AND THE MOMENT MALEBOLGIA TIRES OF YOU, I WILL BE WAITING.

FOR NOW, IT'S TIME FOR US TO WORK.
"THERE ARE FEW IN EXISTENCE WHOM I DESPISE MORE THAN VIOLATOR.
"HE HAS ALWAYS PRESENTED HIMSELF AS THE ONE CREATOR OF THE HELLSPAWN SYMBIOTE. BUT, BEFORE MY INVOLVEMENT, HIS INITIAL EFFORTS HAD ENDED IN FAILURE.
"HIS CLOSEST SUCCESS WAS A FAILED PROTOTYPE THAT HAD ESCAPED INTO THE DARKEST CORNERS OF HELL MONTHS BEFORE.
"BUT THE TRUE FACT REMAINS THAT ON HIS OWN...
"...WITHOUT ME OR *MY KNOWLEDGE*...

".. THERE WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ANY HELLSPAWNS!
AT LAST.
THE TIME HAS FINALLY COME TO PRESENT MY SYMBIOTE TO OUR LORD!
"THROUGHOUT OUR TIME WORKING TOGETHER, VIOLATOR OFTEN BOASTED THAT HE WOULD BE THE VERY FIRST HOST FOR THE SYMBIOTE
"SUCH A PROMISE HAD NEVER BEEN MADE TO HIM, BUT VIOLATOR'S ARROGANCE DID NOT ALLOW THERE TO BE ANY OTHER POSSIBILITY"

"I ADMIT TOO, THAT WATCHING HIM LEARN *THE TRUTH* IS ONE OF THE GREAT JOYS OF MY LIFE."
LORD MALEBOLGIA, PLEASE... I BEG OF YOU!
I have made my choice, Violator.
I've chosen Cogliostro to be my FIRST Hell-Spawn.
A HUMAN SOUL?? *NO!* THE HONOR SHOULD BE FOR A NATIVE OF HELL.
Know your place, Violator!
Your reaction serves as proof of your unfitness.
Cogliostro, come! Step forward.
I AM HUMBLED, LORD.

I need more from you than mere humility.
Much more.
ARISE, NOW!
You are neither Cogliostro nor symbiote, you are my HELLSPAWN!
"BECOMING 'HELL'S FIRST WARRIOR' ONLY DROVE MY LUST FOR WANTING MORE, AND SO, OVER YEARS, I WAGED RELENTLESS WAR ON MALEBOLGIA'S BEHALF."

"BUT ALL THE WHILE I WAS GATHERING MORE AND MORE SUPPORT FOR MY OWN PLANS.
"CONVERTING DEMONIC SOLDIERS, ONE BY ONE, TO MY WAY OF THINKING. THAT OUR GROUP'S SACRIFICES AND BLOOD-SHED IS WHY MALEBOGIA HELD HIS POWER.
"WITHOUT US, HE WAS NOTHING."
"MY RECRUITING GREW UNTIL IT OVERFLOWED.
THE QUESTION IS, WHAT IS OUR NEXT MOVE?
WE MOVE TO TAKE THE THRONE--ON THE EVE OF THE KORTOSION.
THOSE MOST LOYAL TO MALEBOLGIA WILL BE SCATTERED ACROSS THE REALM THAT NIGHT.
OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, WE INSTALL MEMBERS FROM OUR SIDE, OVER TIME, WITHIN THEIR INNER COURT.
WHEN THE MOMENT ARISES, WE'LL CONTROL BOTH SIDES.
"IF THAT PLAN HAD EVER BEEN IMPLEMENTED, I KNOW WITH EVERY FIBER IN ME, WE WOULD HAVE SUCCEEDED.
"BUT WE NEVER GOT THE CHANCE BECAUSE OF A LONE TRAITOR IN OUR RANKS."

I treated you like a 'true-born.'
And TREASON is what you give in return?
Did you think you could stand against me? The other traitors are all being dismembered as we speak.
But that's nothing compared to your fate.
Your corpse will be smeared across the many...
LORD!
THERE'S ANOTHER CHOICE IN HOW TO PUNISH YOUR PRISONER.

"THE DARK LORD, FOR WHATEVER REASONS, LISTENED TO VIOLATOR. AND THUS BEGAN MY SECOND EXILE... AND AN UNFORGIVABLE PUNISHMENT.
"FOR THE NEXT THIRTY CENTURIES, I WANDERED EARTH, WITH ONLY A SINGLE SPARK OF POWER LEFT TO ME FROM MY HELLSPAWN DAYS.
"ONCE I USED THAT SHRED OF POWER UP, I'D BE RETURNED TO HELL TO BE TORTURED FOR ALL ETERNITY.
"I'VE BEEN TRYING TO STEAL THE NECRO-POWER FROM EVERY HELLSPAWN SINCE... TO NO AVAIL."
BURGER
A PITY, I'D HAVE THOUGHT THAT IN THREE THOUSAND YEARS YOU WOULD HAVE FIGURED HOW TO ESCAPE YOUR TORMENT. GAVE YOU TOO MUCH CREDIT, I GUESS.

WHAT'S IT LIKE, HAVING TO BE JUST HUMAN FOR THAT LONG?
TELL ME, HAS IT EVER CROSSED YOUR MIND...
...THAT IN ALL THOSE YEARS, MALEBOLGIA NEVER OFFERED THE SYMBIOTE TO YOU?
WHY?!
NO MATTER HOW MANY FAILURES, HE KEPT COMING BACK TO HUMANS. NOT YOUR KIND! IMAGINE HOW LITTLE HE MUST HAVE THOUGHT OF YOU!
IT'S WHY HE ALWAYS CALLED YOU A CLOWN.
"VIOLATOR, WANTING TO GLOAT, VISITED ME EVERY CENTURY
BOK
"BUT IN TIME, HE FORGOT ABOUT ME. THEY ALL FORGOT ABOUT ME.
"AND THAT WAS THEIR MISTAKE, THEIR GREATEST SIN."

"BECAUSE NO MATTER HOW LONG IT TOOK, I WAS GOING TO RETURN TO HELL AND CLAIM ITS THRONE.
"MY SEARCH FOR A USEFUL HELLSPAWN NEVER BORE FRUIT.
"EVERYONE WAS A DISAPPOINTMENT...
"...THAT WAS, UNTIL ALBERT SIMMONS.
"FROM OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER, I KNEW HE WAS *DIFFERENT.*
"HE PROVED MY INSTINCTS RIGHT, WHEN HE DEPOSED OF MALEBOLGIA HIMSELF."

"THAT, ULTIMATELY, CREATED MY CHANCE, AND I MADE DAMN SURE I *TOOK IT!* BY SE.ZING HELL'S VACANT THRONE FOR MYSELF.
"THOUGH I REALIZED THAT BEING HUMAN AND BE.NG LIMITED WITH HELLSPAWN POWER NEVER ALLOWED ME TO BE THE RULER I SHOULD HAVE BEEN!
"I TRIED H.DING IT...
".. BUT ENEMIES WERE EVERY - WHERE. WATCHING. WAIT.NG.
"I FELT HEAVEN AND THE 'GREENWORLD' CLOSING IN.
"BECAUSE BOTH KNEW, AS I DID, THAT NO ONE S.TTING ON THE THRONE COULD WIELD ENOUGH POWER TO DESTROY ALL HIS ENEMIES UNTIL HE HAD *THEIR POWERS* FIRST.
"I DIDN'T HAVE THOSE. THAT WAS MY M.STAKE.
"HEAVEN. HELL. THE GREENWORLD. I NEEDED A PIECE FROM ALL OF THEM."

"BATTLES HAD RAGED FOR MANY MONTHS BEFORE I WAS ABLE TO CLAIM EVEN A TINY VICTORY.
"BUT THOSE ENCOUNTERS LEFT ME SEVERELY WEAKENED.
"AND WHEN I TRIED RETURNING TO MY KINGDOM, OUR WORLDS HAD SOMEHOW *CHANGED!*"
...t cannot be...
"WHILE I HAD BEEN AWAY, THE DEAD ZONES HAD BEEN *LOCKED,* PREVENTING ME FROM RETURNING TO MY THRONE.
"BUT THIS TIME, I SWORE, IT WOULDN'T BE A *THIRD* EXILE!"

"BECAUSE, THIS TIME, THERE WAS A WAY TO BEAT THEM, SO I BEGAN LAYING THE GROUNDWORK TOWARDS THAT GOAL. TOWARDS THE ONE OUTCOME IN WHICH I'D GET *EVERYTHING.*
"TO DO THAT, AFTER ALL THESE CENTURIES, REQUIRED A TOTAL TRANS-FORMATION.
"FIRST, THOSE I COULDN'T TRUST NEEDED TO BE ELIMINATED.
"THE REST OF THEM-- I JUST NEEDED TO REINFORCE WHAT THEY ALREADY BELIEVED. THAT I WAS SOME FEEBLE, WORTHLESS, OLD MAN.
"I WANTED TO BE OMEGA'S PRISONER. TO HAVE PLAGUE SPAWN THERE. THAT WAS ALWAYS MY PLAN, AND NOW THAT MY TRANS-FORMATION IS COMPLETE..."*
*See Spawn's Universe #1 - Thomas

"...ONCE AGAIN, EVERYTHING HINGES ON *AL SIMMONS.*"
DID YOU ACCOMPLISH WHAT I ASKED, IRIS?
WE DID. WE'VE RECEIVED WORD SPAWN HAS AGREED TO YOUR MEETING. TONIGHT.
BUT, SIR, YOU SHOULD BE...
IT'S A TRAP, I KNOW. LET HIM HAVE HIS EGO.
I'M UNCONCERNED WITH HOW I ACQUIRE *WHAT I NEED.* IF HE WANTS TO BE THE ALPHA FOR ME TO DO THAT... *FINE!* I DON'T CARE, HE'S OPENING HELL'S DOORS.
SO, I'LL PLAY NICE OR I'LL BEAT IT OUT OF HIM. EITHER WAY, THE 'DEAD ZONES' ARE GETTING UNLOCKED.

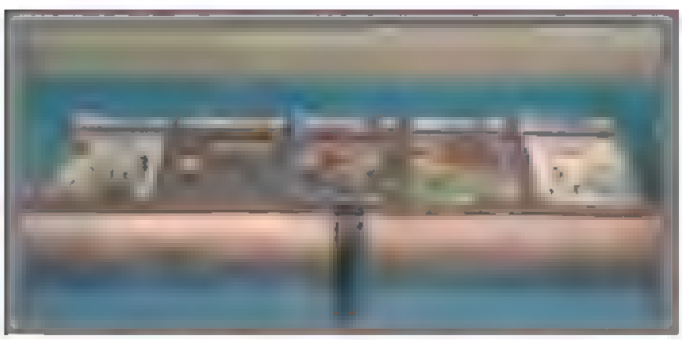
2:2:7:9

SPAWNING GROUND PRESENTS:

MAILBAG

Todd and all other Spawn artists in my opinion are the best comic book artists out there. I mean Spawn is what got me into reading comics. And I love when I get to explain to someone what all you guys have done for the comic world. So I try to support you guys in any way I can. So I hope you guys can have a lot of fun making all this great work. And here's a bit of my collection

-HARRISON



You know what, Harrison? I think you're right! Carlo, Brett, Stephen, Javi, and of course Todd are some of the best in the business right now! They bring a lot of different styles to the books which I think helps us put out a little something for everyone. Thanks for reading. And that's a pretty nice CGC collection

-Thomas

Hi Todd and the Spawn Team! I recently started reading Spawn and NOW I AM HOOKED! I've been catching up on back issues by way of the Compendiums (thank you!) and I have placed Gunslinger Spawn, Scorched, and King Spawn on my pull list at my local comic store. I also added my FIRST SPAWN FIGURE to my collection (Which is dominated by McFarlane Toys DC Multiverse figures!). Please feel free to view the attached photos.

-ROB D, Nevada

Rob, I am glad you got a chance to jump on board with the Compendiums. Those really are a great way to read all the back issues and get caught up. Compendium Vol. 3 will be hitting the stores later this year and some of the issues in that book have never been collected before. Thanks for trying out the other 3 titles as well! We're pretty proud of them.

-Thomas

Hello Spawning Ground,
I'm loving the Spawnverse! I especially enjoyed the inclusion of Haunt. With the expanse and success of the Spawnverse, any chance we might see the return of a Haunt ongoing? Or perhaps Haunt joins Scorched? Gunslinger Spawn has been a revelation as well. The scene where he learned about indoor plumbing made me laugh so hard. My wife posted about it. Keep up the great work!

-JEFF H, Rhode Island

Jeff, we have also been excited to bring Haunt back to the comics. I won't say too much but don't worry you are going to get plenty of Haunt going forward! And I agree that some of the unintentional humor in the Gunslinger book has been great. Thanks for reading, my friend!

-Thomas

Do you have a question or comment about Spawn? If so, e-mail it to us at: **spawninggground@mcfarlane.com**

NEED MORE SPAWN'S UNIVERSE?

DON'T MISS THESE TITLES:

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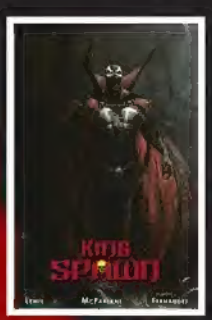
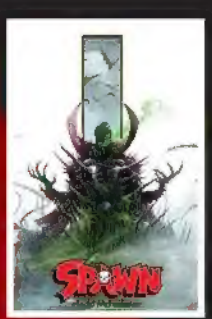
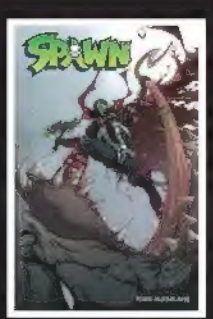
SPAWN'S UNIVERSE

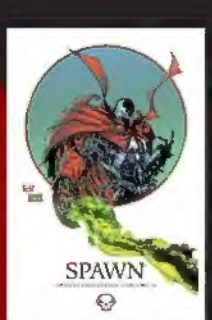
All-New Spawn Trade Paperbacks!







And Classic Spawn Tales!



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